

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to J.A.D. McCurdy, March 17, 1908

1331 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D.C. March 17, 1908. Mr. J. A. Douglas McCurdy, c/o of G. H. Curtiss Co., Hammondsport, New York. Dear Douglas:

I think it very important that you should make every effort to keep a photographic record of what is being done at Hammondsport, on the same general plan as the record you kept at Beinn Bhreagh.

The photographs sent by Mr. Curtiss would not be sufficient as evidence of diligence and invention, for they bear no identifying mark, they have no date, and they are kept in the hands of the experimenters themselves. You should keep a systematic record for the Association, numbered and dated as at Beinn Bhreagh. You should be responsible for the negatives, and a book of prints should be in the custody of Lieut. Selfridge as Secretary, and the date of receipt of the prints should be initialed by him. There should be also at least two other copies made to be preserved in different places in case of fire. I think one copy should be sent to me, and you should have a third. My copy I can deposit in the fire-proof building of the Volta Bureau in the custody of Mr. Hitz, not a member of the Association.

Now my dear fellow do look after this for the importance of the photographic record is greater than you have any conception of. 2 Sometime or other litigation on flying machine inventions will arise and I am seriously troubled by the lack of proper records.

When relating referring to any invention or experiment, we must have evidence in black and white that a certain invention or experiment was made at a certain time, and I fear that you cannot produce such evidence of what has been done in the past at Hammondsport.

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The Glider and the Aerodrome Red Wing have been changed from time to time. Additions have been made and the apparatus has been modified in various ways. What record have you of these changes, and the date of the modification? The easiest way, I think, and by all means the most satisfactory is to preserve a record consisting of dated photographs. In fact just the plan we had at Beinn Bhreagh.

Yours sincerely, Alexander Graham Bell